

Message Text

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72

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-15

USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-13 DRC-01 /119 W

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R 191146Z SEP 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7247

INFO AMCONSUL NHA TRANG

AMCONSUL BIEN HOA

AMCONSUL DANANG

AMCONSUL CAN THO

CINCPAC

USDEL JEC PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 16672

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT VS

SUBJ: UPPER HOUSE DEBATES SENATORS' RIGHTS

1. UPPER HOUSE EXTRAORDINARY SESSION THAT TOOK THREE DAYS TO COMPLETE DUE TO QUORUM DIFFICULTIES CLOSED SEPT 19 WITH THE PASSAGE OF A RESOLUTION ON "THE CURRENT RIGHTS OF SENATORS". A LONG-PENDING BILL ON THE STATUS OF PROSECUTING MAGISTRATES WAS ALSO APPROVED AND SENT BACK TO THE LOWER HOUSE FOR SECOND-ROUND ACTION. THIS WAS THE SECOND EXTRAORDINARY SESSION OF THE SUMMER RECESS PERIOD.

2. INTEREST CENTERED ON THE RESOLUTION CONCERNING SENATORS. MEMBERS OF THE BUDDHIST OPPOSITION GROUP AND OF CHAIRMAN HUYEN'S INDEPENDENT LILY GROUP ARGUED THAT THE HOUSE SHOULD ASSERT THE RIGHTS OF SENATORS AGAINST ALLEGED EXECUTIVE USURPATION. THEY SPECIFICALLY COMPLAINED ABOUT THE EXECUTIVE'S HABIT OF REFUSING EXIT PERMITS FOR SENATORS WHO ARE CRITICAL OF THIEU EVEN AFTER THE UPPER HOUSE CHAIRMAN HAS APPROVED VALID, OFFICIAL TRIPS FOR THEM. PRO-ADMINISTRATION SENATORS

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COUNTERED THAT A DEBATE ON THIS SUBJECT WAS UNNECESSARY.

3. THE FINAL RESOLUTION CONSISTED LARGELY OF STATEMENTS AGAINST ALLEGED EXECUTIVE INFRINGEMENT OF SENATORS' RIGHTS. IT PASSED BY A VOTE OF 22 TO 2 (WITH 31 SENATORS ABSENT OR NOT VOTING).

4. MUCH OF THE SEPT 17 SESSION WAS DEVOTED TO A FAREWELL SPEECH BY OPPOSITION SENATOR PHAM VAN TAM, WHOSE TERM EXPIRES THIS MONTH. BITTERLY OUTSPOKEN AGAINST THE ADMINISTRATION AS USUAL, HE SAID HIS SIX YEARS IN THE UPPER HOUSE HAD WITNESSED "THE INCOMPETENCE AND DECLINE OF A REGIME, THE COLLAPSE OF AN ENTIRE AUTHORITY, AND THE BANKRUPTCY OF AN ENTIRE POLICY".

5. COMMENTS: APART FROM CLEARING THE DOCKET OF THE MAGISTRATES BILL, THE THREE-DAY SESSION PRODUCED NO LASTING RESULTS. THE RESOLUTION ON SENATORS' RIGHTS CAN BE VIEWED AS AN EXPRESSION OF SENATORIAL OPINION IN THE LAST WEEKS OF OPPOSITION ASCENDANCY. ONE OPPOSITION SENATOR CONFIDED TO EMBASSY OFFICERS SEPT 19 THAT THE SENATOR MOST EAGER TO HOLD THE SESSION WAS PHAM VAN TANM, WHO WANTED A FORUM TO DELIVER HIS VALEDICTORY. THE NEXT UPPER HOUSE REGULAR SESSION BEGINS OCTOBER 1, WHEN THE 31 NEWLY ELECTED SENATORS WILL TAKE THEIR SEATS.
APPLING

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